THE SECOND GREATEST

dancin' singin' musical comedy Western 'bout folks what's pinin' fer

SEX

Well I don't know if I'd class it among the GREAT films, even secondarily, but, as **IMDB User ‘marcslope’** concluded, in the excellent review uploader DEF GP kindly included in the description, and I repeat here, it’s definitely great *Fun*.

IMDb User Review : I can give you all the data / On that gal named Lysistrata

*(Nov. 28, 2018 by **marcslope**) : That's a typical couplet from this Universal musical, a rather desperate attempt to cash in on MGM's success with "Seven Brides for Seven Brothers". It hews to that formula very closely: Take an ancient myth ("Lysistrata" instead of "Rape of the Sabine Women"), set it out West, write a plot-specific score (in this instance, by many hands), and cap it with lots of athletic choreography (by Lee Scott, who's no Michael Kidd, but that is, admittedly, a high bar). George Marshall, by now something of a Western musical veteran, having just wrapped "Red Garters", directs briskly, and it's an interesting cast. Neither George Nader nor Jeanne Crain could sing, both are dubbed, but both sure were pretty. Kitty Kallen, a popular recording artist at the time who didn't have much luck with movies, has one nice ballad. The always wonderful Tommy Rall, inexplicably eighth-billed, does some astounding leaps. Keith Andes, too hunky to be playing a priest, gets to sing a song, one of those pseudo-religious mid-'50s things, while chopping down a tree, and winds up with Mamie van Doren. Bert Lahr clowns, Paul Gilbert gets a big specialty number, Jimmy Boyd squeaks, and the story gets spun out decently enough. It's another enterprising mid-'50s musical, trying to keep a fading genre alive. Is it good? Not very. But fun? You bet.*

Firmly based on the template of *Seven Brides For Seven Brothers* (1954 music Gene de Paul, lyrics Johnny Mercer, choreography Michael Kidd), (there seem not to have been any charges of plagiarism), with bits of :

Oklahoma! (Broadway 1943, film 1955, Rodgers and Hammerstein, choreographer Agnes de Mille, recreating her dances for the film, and IMDb says, "Bella Lewitzky - choreographer's assistant [uncredited]") (a peddler character, and his song having the energy of *'Kansas City'*), and

The Harvey Girls (1946 music Harry Warren, lyrics Johnny Mercer, choreographer Robert Alton) (female blacksmith).

I think of some other Western musicals, but not remembering any *particular* similarities:

Calamity Jane (1953 music Sammy Fain, lyrics Paul Francis Webster, choreographer Jack Donohue, assistant Ernie Flatt [uncredited] IMDb),

Red Garters (1954, director George Marshall's previous film, its songs were by Jay Livingston and Ray Evans, who provided this film's title song. Choreographer Nick Castle),

Go West Young Lady (1941 music by Saul Chaplin, lyrics by Sammy Cahn, choreographer Louis Da Pron),

Annie Get Your Gun (Broadway 1946, film 1950, Irving Berlin, choreographer, Broadway - Helen Tamiris, film - Robert Alton, Alex Romero assistant choreographer [uncredited] IMDb).

Full screen single name credits, in the opening credits, "Written for the Screen by Charles Hoffman", and "Choreography by Lee Scott". His entry in Larry Billman's *Film Choreographers And Dance Directors : An Illustrated Biographical Encyclopedia* is here, (borrow only) :
https://archive.org/details/filmchoreographe0000bill/page/485/mode/1up
It says he was assisted on this film by Jack Harmon and Lucille Lamaar.

There are a number of YouTube uploads of the *"Waterfront Ballet"* from *Excuse My Dust* (1951) choreographed by Hermes Pan, in which Lee Scott dances with Sally Forrest.

There's a profile of Lee Scott among the program notes of the almost readable lo-res page scans of the souvenir program for *My L. A.*, a 1951 revue which was created by remarkable talents but lasted only four performances :

https://archive.org/details/1951-my-la-program cover

https://ia601805.us.archive.org/BookReader/BookReaderImages.php?zip=/1/items/1951-my-la-program/1951_My_LA_Program_jp2.zip&file=1951_My_LA_Program_jp2/1951_My_LA_Program_0001.jp2&id=1951-my-la-program&scale=2&rotate=0 enlarged page, credits

https://ia601805.us.archive.org/BookReader/BookReaderImages.php?zip=/1/items/1951-my-la-program/1951_My_LA_Program_jp2.zip&file=1951_My_LA_Program_jp2/1951_My_LA_Program_0005.jp2&id=1951-my-la-program&scale=2&rotate=0 enlarged page, Lee Scott (and Joel Marston) photo and bio

The credits for the songwriters are not among the opening credits, but at the end of the film. The end credits give each of the 11 principals a bit of film with the actor's name, 'as', their character's name, followed by a list of seven more of the character and cast names, and "Square Dancers - The Midwesterners". Then after the cast, there's a screen listing the six songs by Moody and Sherrell, with their names below in smaller type than the song titles. Then there's a screen for the other 2 songs, their authors' names in the same size type as the titles.

The music is by Phil Moody, lyrics by Doris Sherrell (as Pony Sherrell) : except for :

Title song by Jay Livingston and Ray Evans sung by Bert Lahr : and :

How Lonely Can I Get by Joan Whitney and Alex Kramer sung by Kitty Kallen and danced by Tommy Rall. Appropriate that lyricists for this piece were women. I wonder if Ms. Sherrell's colleagues, during the writing, called her, "our Sappho".

The singing for Jeanne Crain was dubbed by Doreen Tryden, and George Nader's singing was dubbed by Bill Lee. For the song *Send Us A Miracle* IMDb says, "[p]erformed by Keith Andes (voice probably dubbed)", which must be incorrect, though it's not unheard of for Hollywood to dub people for no good reason. Baritone Keith Andes' career included a lot of singing roles, but sadly few were recorded on film, record, or video. Discogs lists only the original Broadway cast recording of *Wildcat* (1960, Lucille Ball's leading man). You'd've thought he'd've made at least one LP, as so many actors not widely known for their singing did in those days.

One thing this film has that *Seven Brides* doesn't have ; a clogging number. The Midwesterners were the dancing group from the television show *Midwestern Hayride* which came out of Cincinnati, Ohio.

If anyone knows of another feature film that includes clogging, please add a comment.

I'm reminded of the schottische in the wonderful diamond wedding anniversary ceilidh scene at minute 49 in *I Know Where I'm Going* (Powell and Pressburger 1945). The hop in the dance makes for audible steps, but it's not clogging.

The banjo playing blacksmith was country star Cynthia May Carver - "Cousin Emmy" - they gave her character the name she used professionally. Her appearance on Pete Seeger's TV show *Rainbow Quest* is here: https://archive.org/details/RainbowQuest18

Jimmy Boyd had recorded the song *"I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus"* for Columbia Records in 1952, when he was 13 years old, (Wikipedia).

Wikipedia has short pages for Joan Whitney and Alex Kramer, but I had to search further for Moody and Sherrell. Discogs has short biographies:
https://web.archive.org/web/20231029213812/https://www.discogs.com/artist/4686814-Pony-Sherrell
https://www.discogs.com/artist/3061259-Phil-Moody – (The Wayback captures of his page are from before the little biography was added. I've copy-and-pasted it below.)

The Phil Moody Discogs page had a link to a lively piece of newspaper writing from the Saturday November 13, 1982 issue of *The Desert Sun*, Palm Springs, California: *Partying at Moody's: Joining Grace and Phil For A Few Songs* by Bruce Fessier, Desert Sun Entertainment Editor : see excerpt below :
https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=d&d=DS19821113.2.251
California Digital Newspaper Collection - Center For Bibliographical Studies and Research - University of California, Riverside.

Then there is this page of a blog devoted to Mae West, from when Moody died in 2011. :
https://maewest.blogspot.com/2011/08/mae-west-rip-phil-moody.html

Recordings by Cousin Emmy, Jimmy Boyd, Pony Sherrell, Phil Moody, or of songs by Joan Whitney and Alex Kramer, can be found on YouTube, and some here in the Archive.

One hopes that a good print of *The Second Greatest Sex* exists and someday a video can be released in the proper CinemaScope aspect ratio, letterboxed.

He's got a slight accent that reveals his origins in South Hampton, England, and he's got a twinkle in his eyes that shows he's really enjoyed the experiences he's gathered.

Like, for example, the time Moody was asked to re-write George Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" in the 1950s.

The Stardust Hotel in Las Vegas had staged a $300,000 to $400,000 extravaganza around that number with nude women dancing to an elaborate choreography.

The show was a smash, said Moody. The only problem was, the owners of the hotel hadn't received permission from the Gershwin family to use the song.

"Eight months later," Moody said, "Ira Gershwin walks in and leaves in a fit."

Later, Moody said, the owners got a note from the Gershwin family telling them to stop the show within two weeks.

The Stardust was making $24,000 a week from the show, said Moody, and almost as importantly, "they thought they had something terribly artistic."

The owners called Moody for help. Moody was well-known for the nightclub acts he had written in Las Vegas and they asked him to change the music just enough to avoid a plagiarism suit.

"I looked at the show," he said, "and had the entire 'Rhapsody in Blue' written out for me. (Then) I proceeded to rewrite 'Rhapsody' with all the beats in place, the crescendoes and the themes the same, but with a completely different melody.

"I had to do it in five days. The sheriff was standing at the door!"

But the rewrite was perfect. The dancers didn't have to change one step and, after two rehearsals, Moody said "everything fell into place.

"It was the 11th hour," he said. "All the bosses were there (and) they hadn't seen it. Everybody was holding their breath because if it didn't work, 'That's it, kid.'"

Fortunately, it worked. So well in fact, Moody said, "One of the bosses didn't even know the music was changed." The show went on and a plagiarism suit was averted.

Clipping from the article from the Saturday November 13, 1982 issue of *The Desert Sun*, Palm Springs, California.

Partying at Moody's: Joining Grace and Phil For A Few Songs by Bruce Fessier, Desert Sun Entertainment Editor.

Illustrative of Phil Moody's abilities as an arranger, adapter, creator of 'derivative work'.

The **Discogs** profile:

American Jazz piano player, songwriter, bandleader and musical director. Born: September 11, 1921 in Southampton, England, UK Died: August 22, 2011 (age 89) in Palm Springs, California.

He was 'fresh off the boat' from Merry Ol' with a degree from The Royal Academy when he got his first assignment from MCA to music direct a vaudeville sister act called "The Sherrell Sisters".

Moody later married one of the sisters Grace Moody and became chief songwriting partner with the other, Pony Sherrell. Numerous songs of their collaborations were used in movies.

Moody and his wife, Grace, owned and presented original musical revues in Moody's Supper Club in Palm Springs for 10 years, beginning in 1981. They had their own rooms at the Ranch Club and Livreri's Italian Restaurant in Palm Springs for a decade before and after that.

IMDb : Soundtracks :

WHAT GOOD IS A WOMAN WITHOUT A MAN

Music by Phil Moody

Lyrics by Doris Sherrell (as Pony Sherrell)

Sung by female cast members; reprised by George Nader (dubbed by Bill Lee)

TRAVELIN' MAN

Music by Phil Moody

Lyrics by Doris Sherrell (as Pony Sherrell)

Sung and Danced by Paul Gilbert and chorus

MY LOVE IS YOURS

Music by Phil Moody

Lyrics by Doris Sherrell (as Pony Sherrell)

Performed by George Nader (dubbed by Bill Lee)

THERE'S GONNA BE A WEDDING

Music by Phil Moody

Lyrics by Doris Sherrell (as Pony Sherrell)

Sung by Sharon Bell and chorus

HOW LONELY CAN I GET

Written by Joan Whitney and Alex Kramer

Sung by Kitty Kallen and Danced by Tommy Rall

SEND US A MIRACLE

Music by Phil Moody

Lyrics by Doris Sherrell (as Pony Sherrell)

Performed by Keith Andes (voice probably dubbed) and chorus

LYSISTRATA

Music by Phil Moody

Lyrics by Doris Sherrell (as Pony Sherrell)

Performed by Jeanne Crain (dubbed by Doreen Tryden) (uncredited) and chorus

THE SECOND GREATEST SEX

Written by Jay Livingston and Ray Evans

Sung by Bert Lahr; also uncredited voices behind end credits